197 193 The Thonga idiom belongs to the *South-Eastern group of the Bantu languages* and is related both to Sutho and Zulu. All these languages have in common certain grammatical features which distinguish them from other groups. Amongst them I may mention the frequent use of the lateral sounds *hl, dl, tl*, the presence of seven or eight distinct classes of nouns, recognizable by prefixes which correspond to each other in these three languages, the formation of the locative by a suffix *ini* or *ng* and not by prefixes, the consequent absence of the three locative classes pa, ku, mu, etc. It has been asserted by people who have not studied Thonga carefully that it is merely a dialect of Zulu. This is not true (1). Thonga is altogether different from Zulu and Sutho, though it closely resembles both, especially Zulu.

194 197 *Relation to Sutho.* As regards Sutho, its phonetic system is characterised by the absence of a certain phenomenon common to most Bantu languages, to Thonga and Zulu especially. The Bantu phonology is dominated by a peculiar nasalisation of certain consonants when prefixed by an *n* or an *m*. This *n* or *m* is generally the prefix of the class mu-ba, mu-mi or in-tin (zin), and has the power of producing marvellous changes in this initial consonant. But, in Sutho, this prefix is dropped altogether except in a few cases, and these nasalised sounds are almost entirely lacking. As regards some other grammatical features, Sutho, especially the Pedi dialect of Sutho, is not so far from Thonga. It is not possible to quote many instances; let us only remark that Sutho possesses the roots *loya* for witchcraft and *yila* for taboo which are also present in Thonga and are lacking in Zulu.

Relation to Zulu. The great difference between Thonga and Zulu as regards phonetics is the complete absence of the three characteristic Zulu clicks (2) in Thonga. The Thongas have no

(1) Thongas and Zulus *do not understand* each other. In linguistic terminology, I think one ought never to designate as a dialect of a language an idiom which people speaking that language cannot understand at all. It is then a different language altogether, and we ought to keep the term dialect for the various forms of a single language which are of such a nature that people speaking them can understand each other more or less perfectly.

(2) The Zulu clicks are, as is generally believed, of Hottentot origin. It is not surprising therefore that they were not adopted by the Thongas, who do not seem to have had any contact with Hottentots.

194 clicks at all except in a few words borrowed from the Zulu like
197 nqolo, wagon. Certain letters regularly permute from one language into the other: *Z* of the Zulu is *t* in Thonga; *r* of the Thonga is generally replaced by *l* or *th* in Zulu.

Originality of Thonga. But though Thonga and Zulu resemble each other in many respects, Thonga possesses some peculiar features which prove its originality. As regards its sounds, it is characterised by the frequent occurrence of a labial sibilant sound, a little like ps pronounced with a kind of whistling, which corresponds to the Zulu *z* in the plural of the class isi-izi. It is further characterised by some special nasalisations of initial consonants. *N+k*, which remains *nk* in Zulu, becomes *h* in Thonga: for instance the Zulu *nkosi*, chief, is *hosi* in Thonga. (It is *Khushi* in Sutho-Pedi where the initial *n* has been dropped). There is a long list of words of the in-tin class which show this phenomenon (homu, ox; huku, hen, etc.). The initial *r* when preceded by *n* becomes *nh* (*nh*ena, warrior; tin*h*aru, three; cf. raru, three, burena, bravery, morena, in Sutho, chief). This seems to be the primitive combination. In some other cases it becomes *ntjh* in Ronga and *ndj* in Djonga (rako, behind, *ntjh*ako, *ndj*ako). These two *r* have probably a different origin in the Ur-Bantu. These transformations are peculiar to Thonga.

193 As regards morphology, Thonga has some striking peculiarities: a great variety of demonstrative forms due to the presence of a kind of demonstrative particle *le* or *la* and also a great development of the participial forms of the verbs. In its conjugation, the verb is quite as well provided with auxiliaries as in any other South African language and we could easily discover in Thonga the one or two thousand combinations which have been counted in the Zulu conjugation.

Thonga, for all these reasons, is a language apart which has developed with its different dialects.

197 *The six dialects.* We have tried to classify them under six names, but this classification is, of course, purely formal: in fact each of them presents transition forms, and they coalesce with each other through a great number of intermediary

115 forgotten (especially in Basutoland). It may also be that some mistakes have been made, and I must apologize if such is the case. However I give this table as it is, after having done the best I could, knowing, as I said in my introduction, that Science proceeds by successive approximations and hoping that it will be a useful stone in the building up of African ethnological Science.

* * *

194 As regards the spelling of all these words, I have followed as well as I could the system used in the books of the different languages. As, however, there is a deplorable multiplicity in the orthographic systems of South Africa, certain signs have not exactly the same value in all the columns. It is impossible to avoid this drawback, but it is of minor importance, my first aim being ethnographic and not linguistic. In Thonga I render by *ps* the sibilant *s* which is represented by *s* with a circumflex in the Thonga-Ronga books, and by *tj* and *dj* the cerebral *t* and *d*. I employ undiscriminately *b* for the strong *b* which is more common in Ronga and for the soft *b*, represented by $\tilde{v}$ in Thonga-Djonga books.

The Rev. P. Schwellnus has kindly transcribed most of the Khaha terms collected by me in the orthography recently adopted for Pedi books. Thus the letter *g*, when found alone or after *k*, represents the greek *ɣ*, a hard fricative guttural, whilst *g* associated with *n* corresponds to the nasal guttural *ng* in the English "singing" ($\tilde{n}$ in Thonga). The cerebral *t* (*tj* in Thonga) is represented by *c*. In this form the kinship terms do not entirely agree with the Khaha pronunciation. The Khahas have a tendancy to soften many sounds (*dz* instead of *ts*, a kind of *d* instead of *tl*). I have adopted, however, the official Pedi orthography, as it is inadvisable, from a practical point of view, to preserve all the peculiarities of less important dialects or semi-dialects.

In the Sutho orthography *kh* corresponds to the Pedi *kg* ; *l* before *i* and *u* represents a sound intermediary between *l* and *d*, also present in Chopi, a soft cerebral *d* ; in Pedi it is written *d*. This sound occurs in the feminine suffix *ali* (Sutho), *adi* (Pedi) often met with in kinship terms (*ati* in Thonga, *azi* in Zulu, *adzi* in Venda). *O* and *u* are used both in Sutho and Pedi for the semi-vowels *w* and *y*. *Ch* in Sutho is pronounced like *tsh* in Thonga and Zulu.